

COMMON PLACE- IDENTITY OF INDIAN TOWNS THROUGH HISTORIC MARKETPLACES: A CASE OF LUCKNOW

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ABSTRACT

An identity of a place finds root in its skeletal features, associated activities, and the various experiences form critical features of that place. In Indian cities, marketplaces with their specific and unique architectural features have played an important role in an area's economic and social driving engines and become an integral part of the cultural geography. It is a result of the multi-cultural wealth of India through which we experience a peaceful co-existence and merging of different beliefs, religions, and traditions for decades. With an in-depth comparative analysis, the different aspects of various influences can be assessed and provide a basis for sustainable refurbishment and planning for the historical bazaars with maintaining its original identity and modern functions.

The conservation and enhancement of individual as well as collective parts of the historic built environment and their settings contribute to the wellbeing of communities, to the region's economy, and the enjoyment of visitors. This paper looks into finding elements that create a common place-identity of historic Indian city Lucknow, a medieval city that lives through modern changes. It expresses the salient architectural heritage in the built environment of marketplaces of Lucknow, that needs to be restored for heritage preservation with current usage. Keywords: Place-identity, Indian Heritage Architecture, Historic Marketplaces, Lucknow.

INTRODUCTION

In modern times the unplanned development in historic cities has destroyed the view- scape of the otherwise beautifully designed aesthetics. As Lynch has pointed out, life is not impossible in such places, but the quality of life can be better if the urban quality is maintained. Moreover, view- scape of a heritage precinct- has an essential role to play to have an understanding of this historic environment in towns and cities (Lynch, 1960). There are several studies on the perceived quality of the urban environment that tries to establish a harmonious relationship between the architecture of this view-scape that include streetscape and landmarks, and people around it.

In the Indian context, studies and research focusing on the visibility of historic streetscapes and the preservation of their view are not given importance. But there is a need for such research to protect the views and to sustain the cultural as well as the architectural identity of a city. These landmarks are constantly threatened by surrounding urban development, which obscures the traditionally enjoyed views. This study attempts to fill that gap by studying the architectural elements that become its identity in the present scenario. The benefits are:

- It allows the designers to pick better options from all available alternatives for façade design in historical cities of India. The outcomes of the study will enable designers to identify the identifying features that people relate to from all façade elements.

- The shift of primary stakeholders being developers to the users has given rise to develop an understanding of what the users want and what are their aspirations from the development project.
- The primary focus of development bye-laws is on the planning of an area, but it also tends to keep a check on the certain visual aspect, knowingly or unknowingly. The aesthetic quality of urban spaces and view scape creation has now become an essential part of these laws. The regulations for street façade will be beneficial if a designer wants a list of elements that give identity to the place.
- The identity design generated by user preference survey is a cost-effective way of designing an urban area where people can relate to the architecture, without any extra effort.

BACKGROUND

Lucknow Metropolis lies between the coordinates of 26° 30' N to 27° 10' N latitudes and 80° 30' E to 81° 13' E longitudes. It is the capital city of one of the most populous state of Uttar Pradesh in India. Lucknow is situated in the middle of Gangetic Plain and spreads on the banks of the river Gomati, a left-bank tributary of river Ganga. It enjoys a central position in the state of Uttar Pradesh. (Kumari, May 2015).

Nawabi reign is vital for the development of the architecture of the city. Architecture shared the major part of the resources and energies of the rulers, known as Nawabs. Almost every deceased ruler was accorded a tomb; every new Nawab superstitiously abandoned the palace where his predecessor died and built his own. Religious architecture received special impetus from their unbounded enthusiasm towards the glorification of the names of the Imams. In the course of a hundred years, Lucknow was all over studded with scores of palatial monuments, majestic gateways, Imambaras, mosques, tombs, country houses, including more than a hundred monuments in all. So that when Russel visited Lucknow in 1857, he recorded his impressions with reference to its monumental buildings in the following words, *"Not Rome, nor Athens, nor Constantinople, nor any city in India appears to me as striking as this, and the more I gaze, the more its beauty grows upon me."* (Oldenburg, 1984)

The monuments of the Nawabi period may be broadly divided into two groups;

- religious buildings such as tombs, mosques, and Imambaras; and
- Secular buildings consisting of palaces, pavilions, garden-houses, and gateways.

In the former kind of buildings, the traditional elements of Mughal architecture are consistently preserved. A sanctuary covered by a dome, tall minarets with cupolas, a high plinth for the base, range of cloisters, arches, arcades, kiosks, and turrets continues to be employed. Although one finds some casual foreign elements adopted here and there, such as Corinthian pillars, Gothic vaulting, and Roman round arches, they are of a distorted form, or their effect remains subdued due to overpowering native elements. Nawabi architecture makes an exciting transformation of the Afghani style into what may be called the contemporary European style. This change may be said to have taken place in three phases of transition.

- **THE FIRST PHASE**

It is characterized by the adoption of Mughal style and is represented by the tomb of Safdar Jung built in 1754, his own tomb, palaces of Faizabad, and some earlier buildings

of Lucknow, such as the Daulat Khana palace, with the penetration of British political influence into Awadh,

- **THE SECOND PHASE**

European influence becomes more visible here; Shuja-ud Daulah was the first to do requisition of the services of a British engineer. Only casual traces of European influence are seen at this time and seem to have entered by modifications or additions. The Nawab himself might have suggested these changes in the plan.

An essential role in this direction was played by Claude Martin, the French adventurer who settled in Lucknow during the reign of Asaf-ud Daulah. The fantastic of his creation captured the imagination of the Awadh builders who could see in it fresh ideas to introduce in their own buildings. From then onwards, European elements continued to infiltrate increasingly into the native architecture. The demand for European engineers increased.

- **THE THIRD PHASE:**

Of these, the names of MacLeod and Tucket are worth mentioning. MacLeod was employed by Saadat Ali Khan, who owing to his long association with the English, was much inclined to 'the western ways of life.' Tucket served under Ghazi-ud Din Haider. The buildings erected under European influence in the second phase combine the indigenous and foreign elements. Examples of these are the Palace Farhat Riakhsh, the Great Chhattar Manjil Palace, Lal Baradari. The buildings erected in a purely English style represent the third phase. Specimens of this are Hayat Bakhsh, DiTaram, Alsiji Baghj Sufaid Baradari, and Lunka Palace.

These phases cannot be rigidly separated chronologically. The whims and fancies of the individual builders largely determined the style of a building. Almost all the palaces of Saadat Ali were built

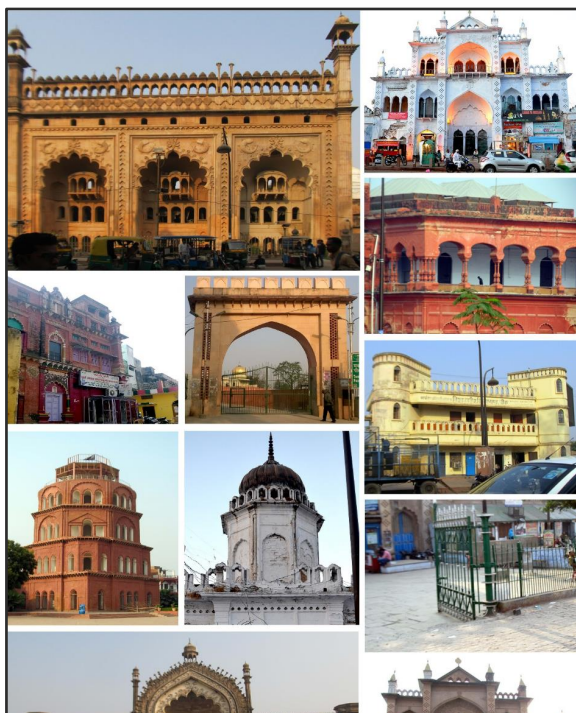


Figure 1. The Heritage Precincts showcasing buildings from the phase 1 (Image source: Author)

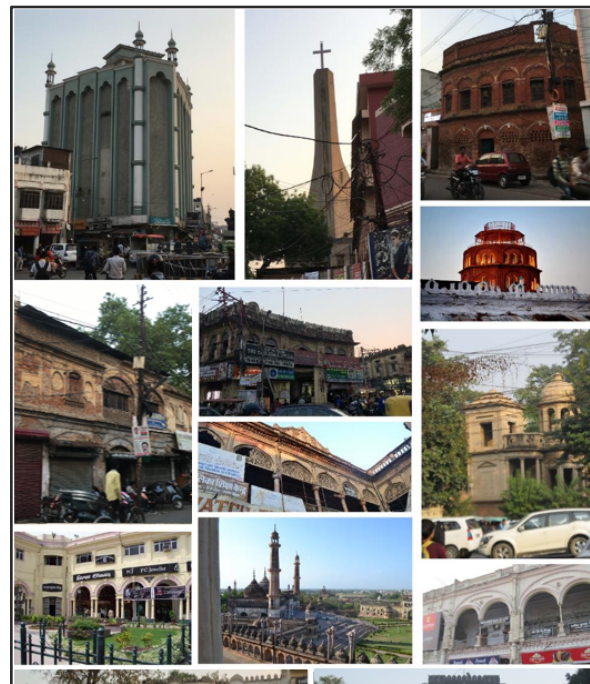


Figure 2. The marketplaces demonstrating other phases and the effect of various developments in Lucknow (Image source: Author)

in the English style. The fact is, that the process of transformation was still in its early stages when the dynasty came to an end.

METHODOLOGY

The study started with a literature review for a place- identity principles and creation methods. It was followed by a literature review of various historic markets that are still in use, catering to modern needs yet keeping the built heritage intact. After identification of identity creating method, the principle is applied to determine the parts of built heritage that create commonplace identity in three different markets of Lucknow. The three markets studied are the Chhota Imambara Complex market at Hussainabad, Phool Chowk KhunKhunji Road, Aminabagh-Sri Ram Road. This led to a site survey, where a questionnaire survey was done with a sample size of thirty people. It was purposive convenience sampling, where gender and age groups of people were not considered for analysis. The main criteria were that the person must at least be thirty years old, with more than twenty years of stay at the place. This was done to make sure that s/he is familiar to the marketplaces up to a resident level and is not a tourist. The level of familiarity for a tourist and resident is found to be different and affects the common place- identity of a city. (Ginting & Wahidb, 2015).

SURVEY RESULTS

On being asked if they see any relation in facades of buildings on the same street of the three markets under study, 90 % said no. Yet they recognized some relations like 87% found common ornamentation styles, 83% saw a connection between them, and everybody agreed that doors and windows had the same character. People have equally divided opinion about architecture being human scale or not. A combined list of elements from each market was created, and people had to pick the elements that they think is a part of Lucknow markets. The window from the *Aminabagh* area was recognized by most people (75%) because of its colonial character. Unlike windows, doors don't have architectural significance but have cultural meaning for the place. Entries with a particular motif or historical significance were recognized, with 56% of people choosing them. People had no trouble in recognizing dome, and around 90% chose dome from *Imambara*. 86% People chose pointed multifoil/ Moorish arch from the *Bada Imambara* entrance gate, followed by the same arches from two different locations from the same area. These results from the survey were analyzed and are discussed in the next section.

ANALYSIS RESULTS

The survey results are analyzed using the semiotic analysis to derive the list of elements that give identity to the city. (Mishra & Kolay, 2019) It is found that the identity is created by architectural elements like domes, arches, door window design, and the ornamentation. The people pass under the Gateway, known as *Rumi Darwaza*, have a strong visual relationship with it. Hence they related to multi cusped Moorish arch as the most seen element. But all the other choices of architectural elements in the three markets necessarily contained the three-point Mughal arch. This shows that identity creation is a complicated process and needs a deeper study. Similarly, while talking about the window design, respondents found the window design of phase one as most relatable. But their choice also reveals wooden louvers as a part of the windows. It is interpreted that people in all three markets relate to windows of the Mughal style, yet familiar with the European influences. For them, Phase three dominates the door window design in the markets under study. In the ornamentation part, the motif design from phase two is repeated in the markets.

People find this as the defining element that binds all the markets together. The other motif design that brings in the same language is of a flower, which is predominantly used in the *Hussainabad* market, *Chhota Imambara* Complex. It is concluded that the place identity is created by smaller elements of architecture and not a façade as a whole.

CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to investigate into the common place- identity of historical markets of medieval city Lucknow, India, according to users of the place. This study has brought forth the difference in perspectives of people who see the same place every day. The list of elements generated here can be used by designers and planners of these cities to come up with urbanscapes that are more sensitive to the context of the city. The user preference survey also reveals the importance of architecture for people and how they relate to it. It is found that the place identity is created by smaller elements of architecture and not a façade as a whole.

The user preference survey showed that Lucknow has a strong visual identity in the minds of local residents. This shared place- identity is reflected in the survey results where people chose a particular type of arches, domes, traditional elements, motifs, etc., which in turn forms the common place- identity of the city markets. The survey also revealed that the history of these places has a major role in the creation of identity. They relate these stories with architecture and create their own perception of the architectural identity of the place.

The study also revealed elements for designers to use while planning street facades in new developments. The study can be carried forward and take into account other aspects like activities and spatial planning of the area. The same methodology can be used to investigate user preferences in these heritage areas and show their significance. Other building typologies may also be examined similarly.

This study has considered the fact that the essence of an old town marketplace in India, as suggested by several researchers, needs to be protected. The place- identity of these areas needs to take into account the user perspective, too, as they are the regular users of those areas. For a semiotic analysis, street facades can be considered as a composition, and semiotic tools can be used to determine the identity from the user preference survey.

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